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Article *in* Progress in Human Geography · June 2015

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Gender and sexuality I: Genderqueer geographies?

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Abstract
This report considers gender diversity across a range of spaces and places. I note that while the notion of gender has been troubled, there exist opportunities to trouble it further. I highlight the scholarship that has sought to deconstruct genders, and the binary framing of man/woman and male/female roles and relationships. The queering of sexuality has meant that geographers are now tracing the ways in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTIQ) bodies experience and live their gender beyond normative binaries. Research concerned with relational gendered subjectivities within LGBTIQ communities is discussed, and I flag the trend that this research may conflate gendered experiences while privileging sexual subjectivities. Finally, I turn to the recent interest by geographers who – drawing on queer and trans* theories – argue for new and innovative understandings of gender diversity.

Keywords
binaries, bodies, gender variant, genderqueer, transgender

I Introduction

Geographers have been troubling gender ever since Judith Butler's (1990) book *Gender Trouble* (see also Butler, 2004) prompted scholars to disrupt the presumed naturalness of the binary man-masculinity and woman-femininity. Any stable or essentialist understandings of gendered subjectivity have been critiqued. Gender – as understood through feminist, queer and poststructuralist lenses – is a regulated performance, and with this has risen the possibility of transformative power and politics (Sharp, 2009). A large body of scholarship exists precisely to highlight the fluidity of gender, disrupt binaries, and critically examine the relationship between gender and sexual subjectivities (Johnson, 2008; Longhurst and Johnston, 2014).

The field of gender geographies, however, has been charged with focusing 'on normatively gendered men and women, neglecting the ways in which gender binaries can be contested and troubled' (Browne et al., 2010: 573). It seems, then, that after several decades of feminist geographical research intent on subverting dualistic thinking, it is impossible to entirely break free from gender binaries. This has not deterred some geographers, who – informed by critical and queer theories – are considering the materiality and performativity of embodiment as a way of exposing the tyranny of gender (Doan, 2010) and the need for gender diversity (Sheehan and Vadjunec, 2015). This research is

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guided by a politics of gender inclusivity. It is also driven by a desire to 'genderqueer' the discipline of geography via a critique of normative gender subjectivities, places and spaces.

I organize this progress report in the following manner. The section 'Bodies and places beyond binaries' traces the emergence of binary blurring in geographies of gender scholarship and introduces some key genderqueer terms. Following this, the '"LGBTIQ" gender geographies' section highlights relational gender and sexual subjectivities. Within these relational geographies transgender people may be simultaneously included and excluded, marginalized and valorized. There are opportunities for geographers to trace gender diversity, more carefully, across and within LGBTIQ communities. The last section, 'Trans* and gender variant bodies, spaces and places', brings together explicit transgender geographies and gives insights into the structures that produce and differentiate non-normative gender across space and place.

II Bodies and places beyond binaries

Gendered binaries have, for some time, been the subject of critique by human geographers (Bondi, 1992). Johnson (2008) reflects on the impact of an embodied approach to geography scholarship in order to upset gendered binary thinking. This research highlights the association of masculinity with the mind, rationality and so-called legitimate knowledge. The other side of this binary – femininity – is associated with emotion, irrationality, and the body (Johnston, 2005a). At the heart of this debate is the desire to unsettle and disrupt gendered binaries by taking embodiment seriously.

The notion that all bodies fit into either a male or female is hotly contested. In a groundbreaking collection on geographies of sex, gender and sexuality, Cream (1995: 35) asks: 'What is the sexed body?' Cream (1995: 36) shows that bodies which do not fit a male or female binary – bodies such as those who are transsexual, intersex, have XXY chromosomes – are 'pioneers placed, often unwillingly, at the frontiers of sex and gender'. Also during the mid-1990s Namaste (1996) addresses violence against people whose gender is understood as non-normative, particularly for gay men, lesbians and transgender people. By the end of the 1990s it became well established that bodies and places are mutually constitutive and performative (Nast and Pile, 1998), and that gendered subjectivities are fluid.

Metaphors such as mobility and fluidity are often used to describe bodies, places and their constitutive relationship (Baydar, 2012; Smith et al., 2015). Considering ambiguously-sexed bodies, Browne (2004) notes that they may be subject to 'genderism'. Hostile reactions towards gender transgressions – or the 'bathroom problem' where women are mistaken as men – bring into stark relief the performative and material consequences of binary gender norms (Browne, 2006). It is possible to be 'a right geezer-bird' – *geezer* being English slang for men and *bird* slang for women (Browne, 2006: 121). In other words, it is possible to be a man-woman. Men who have breasts – notes Longhurst (2005) – experience feeling uncomfortable in places such as swimming pools, beaches and changing rooms. Indeed, pregnant and lactating men are another example of bodies in-between gendered binaries (Longhurst, 2008). Studies of the excesses of body building and spaces of training (Johnston, 1996) are a good example of geographical research motivated to dismantle dualisms.

Multiple genders, and terms that trouble gender binaries, exist. For example, a person may identify as 'genderqueer' when they do not align with normative or conventional binary gender identities (Nestle et al., 2002). Building upon earlier concepts such as 'androgyny', feminist scholars and transgender activists challenge and expand the concept of gender. Stone's *The*

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Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto (1987) and Feinberg's *Transgender Liberation* (1992) and *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) are key texts which help develop a genderqueer movement (Weaver, 2014) and 'gender outlaws' (Bornstein, 1994).

The term 'transgender' is usually understood – in the West – as an umbrella term for a diverse group of people whose gender is at odds with their ascribed gender (Valentine, 2007). Trans* (with an asterisk) is shorthand for numerous gender minorities, for example, transsexual, transvestite, cross-dresser, genderqueer, non-binary, gender fluid, agender, non-gendered, third gender, trans woman, trans man, drag king and drag queen, to name a few. Non-western non-heteronormative gender categories, for example those in the Pacific, do not necessarily align with western understandings of transgender (Besnier and Alexeyeff, 2014; Hutchings and Aspin, 2007; Schmidt, 2010; Stratford and Langridge, 2012; Te Awekotuku, 2001). Also conflated with trans* may be those who are intersex (Hird, 2003). Intersex refers to a person whose body is not the 'standard' male or female type, and it is estimated that one in 100 people have bodies that differ from standard male or female (see the Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org). The term encompasses over 30 different conditions that all originate prenatally during the foetus's development (Christmas, 2010; Dreger, 2004; Johnston, 2014). Normatively gendered bodies – and the social privilege that comes with this – have come to be known as cisgendered (Enke, 2012). The terms 'cisgender' and 'cis' are now being used by geographers to highlight the embodied privileges of non-transgender bodies in bathrooms (Cavanagh, 2012), and to unsettle the politics of naming the Women and Geography Study Group (Browne et al., 2013).

Key gender terms, rather than being fixed, are reflective of their geographical, historical and disciplinary context (Hines, 2010, 2013). For example, 'transvestite' has been related to gender deconstruction, and 'category crisis' thus challenges any notions of fixed subjectivities (Garber, 1992). Care is needed, however, to not undermine the position, status, and subjectivity of transvestite (Namaste, 1996). Transgender scholars (Davy, 2011; Prosser, 1998; Stryker and Aizura, 2013) have been deeply critical of the lack of engagement in transgender lives. Much of this scholarship argues for the avoidance of universalizing transgender subjectivities. The specificities of transgender mobility (Halberstam, 2005), migration (Cotton, 2012), and trans* movements for social change (Wilson, 2002) are now on the agenda. Currah et al. (2008: 3), leaders in the field of trans* studies, provide critical definitions, as well as trouble the term 'trans'. The work of these scholars is slowly being incorporated in geographies of genders and sexualities, as noted in the next section. There is a great deal of scope, however, to consider the lived and everyday realities of gender variant bodies, particularly within LGBTIQ communities.

III 'LGBTIQ' gender geographies

The intersection of 'LGBTIQ' and gender is a fruitful area for geographers to consider the (in)stability of subjectivities. While sexual subjectivities, such as lesbian and gay, have captured the attention of geographers for many decades, it is only recently that we see a growing visibility of bisexual and trans* subjectivities (Brown, 2011). The acronyms 'LGBT' or 'LGBTQ' appear in many geographical accounts of sexuality and community space. This grouping of gendered and sexual subjectivities is, for the most part, designed to reflect collective interests and 'community as sexual and gendered minorities' (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2014: 757). There may be a tendency by some, however, to add the letters 'T', 'I' and 'Q' to 'LGBTIQ' without giving specific attention to gendered differences. Some geographers have begun to pull apart the acronym in order to

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understand relational subjectivities and experiences of place and space (Nash, 2010). There is now a consideration of the intersections of queer, trans*, and culture (Aiello et al., 2013) and the way in which prejudice works to further marginalize transgender people in LGBTIQ communities (Valentine, 2010). LGBTIQ gendered subjectivities have been missing in planning practice and legislation yet need to be considered in order to create inclusive queer spaces (Doan, 2011, 2015).

In an article that explores the relationship between transgender people and US cities, Doan (2007: 57) argues that 'queer spaces occur at the margins of society and constitute a safe haven for LGBT oppressed by the hetero-normative nature of urban areas'. These 'queer' community spaces are important safe spaces for the expression of non-normative gendered embodiment, for transgender people as well as other 'genderqueer' folk (Doan, 2009).

Places that 'should' be inclusive and queer – Hubbard (2012) argues – are gay villages. Yet these spaces may be unwelcoming for gender variant and transgender people, as shown in Browne and Lim's (2010) research in Brighton, 'the gay capital of the UK'. Browne and Bakshi's (2013) research found that trans* people's experiences of Brighton show that they are the most marginalized of the LGBTIQ grouping. Tensions exist in this LGBT activist community (Browne and Bakshi, 2013) which may surface during gay pride festivals (Johnston, 2005b). Travel for pleasure to, for example, 'gay friendly' tourism destinations – such as Beirut – may mask the complexities of (trans)gender, race, class and sexualities (Moussawi, 2012). While many queer spaces – such as clubs and bars – serve as important haptic sites for constructing gender and sexual subjectivities (Johnston, 2012), they also exclude the 'queer unwanted' (Casey, 2007; Tan, 2013). 'Unattractive' people such as drab dykes (Browne, 2007) experience marginalization in these drag spaces. Similarly, gender diversity is both in and out of place at 'Pussy Palace', a Toronto women's bathhouse event (Nash and Bain, 2007).

Andersson et al. (2011) consider LGBT struggles, lived experiences and theological views in New York and in the Anglican Communion (Vanderbeck et al., 2011). The intersectionality between religion, genders, and sexualities may transform Toledo, Ohio (Schroeder, 2013), and create safe spaces for African American LGBTIQ in Newark (Isoke, 2013). Neighbourhood transformation is also the topic in Queer West Village, Toronto. Here place is re-imagined via a queer youth programme involving people who are trans, intersex, questioning, and two-spirited (Bain et al., 2014). Queer villages, then, may simultaneously be dominated by gay men yet also be depicted as a place of LGBTQ diversity (Podmore, 2013). Gay, straight and transgender alliances on campus (Davidson, 2014) or in women and gender studies classrooms (Kannen, 2013) may help create gender variant educational geographies. At a grander scale, and related to a national desire to create '100 world cities', the Indian government – Shah (2014) argues – must consider and respond to LGBTQ activism and rights.

Art and politics come together on the stage where gender transgressions are applied to queer femme movements (Dahl, 2014). Drag king stage performances may sustain fragile LGBT communities (van Doorn, 2013). Some LGBTIQ spaces, such as those created by the Sydney Gay Games (Waitt, 2008), provide possibilities for inclusive transgender expressions and performances. Transformational stage performances may dilute homophobia and transphobia in contemporary Turkey (Selen, 2012).

Collectively, the consideration of the ways in which LGBTIQ bodies are gendered (in a variety of spaces and places) contests binaries. LGBTIQ community places and spaces may be both welcoming and discriminatory of gender variant bodies. This research establishes the

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importance of political and collective alliances, yet too little attention is given to the gendered embodied differences of LGBTIQ community members, and transgender people in particular. While politically it may be important to hold onto the acronyms LGBT or LGBTIQ, some bodies, depending on their gender expressions, are still marginalized or missing from LGBTIQ geographical inquires. It is vital, therefore, that specific attention is given to trans* and gender variant subjectivities.

IV Trans* and gender variant bodies, spaces and places

Recently geographers have become interested in trans theories and trans spaces and places (see a themed issue titled 'Towards trans geographies'; Browne et al., 2010). Doan (2010) – a powerful voice in the field of trans geographies, particularly her argument on the 'tyranny of gender' – challenges geographers to think beyond gender binaries. Browne and Lim (2010: 616) describe trans studies as 'a growing field of enquiry that seeks to redress . . . the absence of trans lives in queer theory (despite the conceptual deployment of trans subjectivities across this field)'. Hines (2010) uses the term 'trans' to include a diversity of gender identifications. These trans* geographies are informed by a version of feminist, queer poststructuralism and many hold firmly to the notion of materiality and visibility (Namaste, 2000). To put this more directly, this scholarship is not just interested in representations or social constructions of bodies but also in the 'real' fleshy lived materialities of bodies. An explicit reading of transgender and gender variant people's spaces and places highlights often overlooked exclusions.

In a comprehensive study of drag queens in Florida's Key West, Taylor and Rupp (2005) show the ways in which drag queens unsettle the boundaries between man and woman, as well as gay and straight, in the nightclub. Misgav and Johnston (2014) pay attention to trans women's bodies, sweat and subjectivities in a Tel Aviv nightclub, and on another dance floor, in Detroit, 'ballroom culture' facilitates community queer spaces for black and Latina/o LGBTIQ people (Bailey, 2014). The politics of gender can also be seen in analyses of transgender performance in contemporary Chinese films (He, 2013) and films about transnationalism (Sandell, 2010). Significantly, the research conducted in these 'club', dance and performance spaces highlights the ways in which gender is felt, celebrated *and* marginalized for trans* people.

The issues of transitioning at work, applying for work, and keeping work are being discussed by scholars (Bender-Baird, 2011; Doan, 2010). So, while there has been a shift from hiding one's trans identity to living it openly (due to the progress of transgender rights activists (Halberstam, 2005)), discrimination and marginalization still exist in many workplaces. *Travesti* – transgender sex workers in Brazil – prepare their bodies for work by using hormones and industrial silicone (Kulick, 1998). The complexities of being *travesti* are also discussed by Williams (2013), who examines racialized sex work and exclusion in tourist districts of Salvador, Brazil. Silva has spent more than a decade supporting and researching *travesti* in Brazil, including those who move to Spain to work illegally. Her research emphasizes the implications of illegal work, globalization, and mobility (Silva and Ornat, 2014). Payne (2015) notes that in Colombia right-wing paramilitary forces, the state, *and* leftist guerrilla groups are associated with transphobic and homophobic attacks.

Discrimination and marginalization are also very evident when considering age. Not 'fitting in' is illustrated in the high levels of homelessness for transgender youth (Rek, 2009), and this has been noted even in gay neighbourhoods such as The Castro in San Francisco (Brown, 2014). In relation to natural disasters,

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homophobia and transphobia impact heavily on trans* and intersex populations, who have difficulties with, for example, evacuation shelters (Dominey-Howes et al., 2013), displacement, and home loss (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014; D'Ooge, 2008).

Some geographers have illustrated the ways in which festivals challenge gender discrimination in rural places through the inclusion of drag queens (Duffy et al., 2007). Also examining festivals, regional development and drag, Johnston (2009) considers lesbian comedic twins Lynda and Jools Topp, who 'cross-dress to become ''Ken and Ken"'. The Kens' performances reinscribe a nation – Aotearoa New Zealand – as a place of the 'transgendered kiwi' (Brady, 2012). Another semi-rural and politically conservative place – Trinidad, Colorado, in the US – has become known as the sex change capital of the world due to the successes of Dr Stanley H. Biber with gender reassignment surgery (Johnston and Longhurst, 2010). Browne (2009, 2011) ventures into rural spaces of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival to consider the paradoxes and productive possibilities of womyn's space and camp trans. Many oppose the Michfest womyn-born-womyn policy, arguing that it is 'essentialist', outmoded, and transphobic (Feinberg, 1997, Halberstam, 2005).

Sport and leisure activities are saturated with normative gender binaries. When one does not fit gendered binaries – such as a man playing netball – problems arise (Tagg, 2012). Tagg's (2014: 1) research shows the 'most overtly transgender and fa'afafine [Samoan third gender] players were excluded so as to boost the association's heterosexist credentials'. In other spaces of sport, Caudwell (2012) discusses [transgender] young men's social, physical and embodied experiences of football (see also Travers, 2006).

Cosmetic surgery tourism – a growing field of medical tourism – is gaining attention from scholars, including geographers (Holliday et al., 2015) who note that trans* patients are missing from promotional imagery. Aizura's (2013) interviews with Thai and non-Thai trans* women, clinic staff, and surgeons reveal that white trans* women felt well cared for, but Thai and Vietnamese interviewees felt isolated and rejected.

At the state level, research clearly documents pervasive discrimination against transgender people (for a UK example see Whittle et al., 2007). These country reports involve extensive consultation with transgender people and provide vital insights into the lives of trans* people and their treatment by government agencies and courts. They show, at the state level, that trans* people are often not provided for in law and policy, and that inconsistencies and discrimination exist at the state level. The law often fails transgender people, who are at high risk of incarceration and who endure harsh conditions of confinement in the hypermasculine spaces of, for example, US prisons (Rosenberg and Oswin, 2014). Applying for, and obtaining, consistent documentation regarding gender identity can be a major issue for trans* people globally, and raises a number of issues for migration (Seuffert, 2009). Nations assume their citizens – heterosexual and homosexual – are cis men or cis women who conform to 'natural' or 'normal' binary gender.

Explicit attention to transgender people's embodied experiences gives insights into a myriad of structural inequalities, and resistances, produced and differentiated across spaces and places. Genders are relational and socioculturally dynamic, and more research is needed to understand, specifically, transgender people's embodied geographies.

V Conclusion

This report indicates that despite decades of troubling gender, geographers are only just beginning to consider trans* and gender variant subjectivities. A number of provocative, political, and activist lines of research are opening up on transgender, genderqueer, and gender

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variant geographies. Much of this research is informed by a queer understanding of gendered embodiment, places and spaces. There is scope to elevate the importance and distinctiveness of trans* and intersex people's experiences within LGBTIQ community research. Geographers are yet to consider the normative and privileged places associated with being cisgendered. Contemporary scholarly debates, including those based on original empirical material, are now considering bodies and spaces that revolve around, resist, and live in-between and beyond binary gender. This suggests a promising future for transgender geographical investigations and a positive step towards genderqueer geographies.

Acknowledgement

Thank you Sarah Elwood for your excellent guidance. It's very much appreciated.

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